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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

PERNICIOUS LETTER

being

A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the Fort Hays Kansas State College in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Degree of Master of Science

by

Marvin E. Mardock, A. B.

Cascade College

Portland, Oregon

Date May 22, 1957

Approved Roberta C. Stout
Major Professor

Ralph G. Cadu
Chairman Graduate Council

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author hereby expresses his appreciation for the assistance given by many friends cooperating with him in this study. He is greatly indebted to the Friends Haviland Academy Senior class of 1957 whose patience and diligence in presenting the play made its initial debut a success. He is also indebted to his advisor, Dr. Ralph Coder, for timely assistance and suggestions. The author is indebted to his wife for her inspiration and long suffering.

M. E. M.

God Blesses: Central youth group who helped with the play

Helen Swedant: Mrs. Dwyer's nurse, affiliation to the 4th degree, was honored member of the

Charlene Dutton: Bud's girl friend

Norman Johnson: Bud's friend

Gail Robertson: Friends of Bud

Jane Allman:

CHARACTERS

James J. Doyer: Middle aged owner of the Lazy J. Ranch,
Harrington, Wyoming

Sally Doyer: Wife of James

Jerald Doyer: Wayward son, about twenty-two years old who
has just graduated from college

Bud Doyer: Kid brother about sixteen years old. A rancher
enthusiast

Carol Holland: Eighteen year old girl who has stayed with
the Doyers since her parents' death.

Tom Scott: Loves Carol and tries to take Jerald's place
in her heart

Gus Moreland: Comical ranch hand who falls for Miss Braden

Helen Braden: Mrs. Doyer's nurse, efficient to the nth
degree, who becomes engaged to Gus

Charlene Curtess: Bud's girl friend

Norman Johnson:

Celia Robertson: Friends of Bud

Jane Allman:

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The entire play takes place in the comfortable living room of the Doyer's ranch home in the cattle country of Wyoming. As scenes change only minor furniture arrangement and lighting effects will be needed.

Act One:

Scene One: A June morning.

Scene Two: One month later.

Act Two:

Scene One: Two weeks later.

Scene Two: The following morning.

Act Three:

Scene One: About one year later.

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

James Doyer: First Act: Typical rancher's outfit but with engineers boots or oxfords instead of cowboy boots. Has a broad-brimmed western hat and reappears in first act with change of shirt and shoes.

Act Three: Typical evening lounge costume.

Sally Doyer: First Act, Scene One, finds her in print dress and sandals with hair in bandana. In Scene Two she wears gown, robe, and house slippers.

Act Two: Same as scene two, act one.

Bud Doyer: Act One, Scene One: Dirty jeans and western cut shirt with worn cowboy boots.

Act Two: Party dress, not necessarily western.

Act Three: Typical ranch dress with clean jeans.

Jerry Doyer: Act One, Scene One: Slack suit and oxfords.

Act One, Scene Two: Sport shirt, slack pants and oxfords.

Act Two: Same

Act Three: Slack suit drenched with rain.

Carol Holland: Act One, Scene One: Typical summer dress.

Act One, Scene Two: A change of clothing but still summer style.

Act Two, Scene One: Informal party dress.

Act Two, Scene Two: Robe and house slippers.

Act Three: Picnic attire with dress instead of slacks.

Gus Moreland: Act One, Scene One: Typical ranch dress with cowboy boots and hat.

Act Two, Scene One: Informal party dress.

Act Two, Scene Two: Same as act one.

Act Three: Same as act two, scene one with sports jacket.

Tom Scott: Act Two: Extreme dudish dress (fancy boots, etc.)

Helen Braden: Act Two: Typical dress of a nurse on duty.

Act Three: Suit and heels.

Norman Johnson:)

Charlene Curtis:)

Celia Robertson:) Typical informal party dress.

Jane Allman:)

PROPERTIES

I. Stage

A. Act I, Scene I

1. Fireplace
2. Davenport
3. Telephone
4. Telephone desk
5. Floor lamp
6. Stand with flowers
7. Coffee table
8. Easy chair
9. Bible
10. Picture of Jerry and other pictures
11. French windows
12. Chair by telephone

B. Act I, Scene II

Same as act one, scene one but minus flowers

C. Act II, Scene I

Same

D. Act II, Scene II

Same with extra chair

E. Act III

Same minus one chair

PROPERTIES (continued)

II. Personal Jerry comes home from college he is surprised

that A. Jerry is so happy over seeing him. However he dis-

covers 1. Luggage "mysterious letter" has not been received,

and 2. Flashlight and I am are counting on his helping

should 3. Piece of stationery the ranch. Then the letter

comes 4. Bible off a gripping chain of events that brought

the B. Bud is in love. At the volcano rises with Carol,

who is 1. Letter to Jerry, he must also laugh at Bud who

shines 2. Carrot "practical" nurse. At last the prodigal

and C. Carol "real Jerry" that Carol so long to see, her son

climber 1. Ironing board is seeing that the audience will

marill 2. Popcorn

D. Sally

1. Vacuum cleaner

2. Light blanket

E. Helen

1. Thermometer

2. Pillow

F. Gus

1. Magazines and letters

2. Sacks of groceries

SYNOPSIS OF PLAY

When Jerry comes home from college he is surprised that everyone is so happy over seeing him. However he discovers that his "pernicious letter" has not been received, and that his mother and father are counting on his helping shoulder the responsibility of the ranch. Then the letter comes and touches off a gripping chain of events that keeps the audience in tears. As the onlooker cries with Carol, who is in love with Jerry, he must also laugh at Gus who shines up to the "practical" nurse. At last the prodigal becomes the "real Jerry" that Carol so longs to see, and the climax comes in a dynamic ending that the audience will thrill to see.

PERNICIOUS LETTER

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

Locality: Ranch country in Wyoming.

Time: June of the present. Ten o'clock, A.M.

Scene: The living room in a comfortable ranchstyle home in the heart of Wyoming ranching country. Upstage to the right is the door that opens to the dining room and kitchen. Down stage and center are French windows from which one can see the lane road leading to the front yard. To the right and upstage is a brown brick fireplace in which at present no fire is burning.

Lighting: High white foot and overhead lights. Low red and blue foot lights. High white light behind French windows to make it appear like daylight. Floor lamp is not on.

Curtain: Sally Doyer, the tired but efficient mother on the Lazy J is cleaning the living room with the vacuum sweeper. Her hair is tied in a bandana, and as she handles the noisy sweeper she hums bits of a tune. Her face shows both determination and care; however, she is very thoughtful and extremely kind. Buddy Doyer who enters shortly after curtain rises is a husky sixteen-year-old who is full of pep and imagines himself to be quite a rancher. He has a burr haircut and is dressed in dirty jeans, cowboy boots and bright

western shirt. He comes clomping in from outside entrance and is trying to get his mother's attention.

BUDDY: Mom! (Sticking his head into the room) Mom! (Sally keeps singing and does not hear) Hey Mom! (No response. Sally is working toward the center of room with back to Bud. He takes the chair by telephone, slips up behind her, and as she moves backward she sits in the chair with a scream. Bud grabs the sweeper and tears around the room using it furiously. He turns off the sweeper switch and sags into the easy chair by the fireplace). Wow! What a workout. That thing is as hard to hold as old Dynamite.

SALLY: (exasperatedly tired) Buddy, what in the world are you trying to do?

BUD: Bud is the name. Don't you remember, I am growing up? (gestures with his hands) I'm just trying to get you caught up on your work so that you can have time to answer a civil question for me.

SALLY: (with mock contrition) I'm sorry that I offended your dignity. (starting to rise) Now Bud, run along. You know that I don't have time to sit. Jerald said in his last letter that his plans were to arrive in Harrington on the five o'clock bus, --and look at this place. It's a mess! (throws out her hands with an attitude of despair) (She picks up a cleaning rag from the table, and starts to dust).

BUD: (looking around with a quizzical expression) Aw, Mom, I think it looks pretty good, and I guess if Jerry doesn't like it he can just turn around and go back to the city.

SALLY: (scolding) Why Bud!

BUD: I'm just kidding you, Mom. You know I'm just dying to see Jerry. But he had better keep his hi-flutin ag. learnin' to himself. Just because he knows the parts of a horse isn't going to help him stay on top of one any better.

SALLY: I don't think you need to worry about Jerry. Even if he has graduated with high honors, I imagine that he will still be on speaking terms with you. Now, Bud, please---

BUD: (rising and following her) But Mom, you haven't answered my question---

GUS: (entering left front, and breaking into Bud's speech. He is the typical cowboy, unshaven, speaking with a drawl, and dressed in dirty ranch clothing. As he comes in he removes his broad brimmed hat.) Pardon me, Maam, but say, Bud, you'd better git them dry lot steers fed. Thar bawlin like mad.

SALLY: Yes, Bud, go on with Gus. You can talk to me later.

BUD: (exit front left with Gus) A guy doesn't have a chance! Can't even discuss major problems.

CAROL: (enters right rear as Bud and Gus leave. She is a lovely brunette of medium height dressed in summer print house dress and sandals.) I made the beds and cleaned Jerry's

room. What is Buddy's trouble?

SALLY: Oh, he was trying to get me to rest so that he could talk to me. I think he was trying to approach the subject of the family car. I can almost always tell when he is trying to ask for it. He finds Dad more vulnerable if he can get me on his side.

CAROL: (during Sally's last speech she has proceeded with her dusting. Now Carol goes to telephone where Sally is dusting.) I think maybe he was right at least about one thing. You should sit down and rest a little while. Aunt Sally, if you keep going the way you are now, you will be worn to a frazzle. (taking her by the hand) You're popular, Aunty, sit down and rest. I--I want to talk to you, too. (they both sit on the daveno).

SALLY: (patting Carol's cheek) Now don't worry about me. What is it that you want to tell me, honey?

CAROL: Mrs. Doyer, you've been real swell to me, you and Uncle Jim, and coming to live with you since--Mother and Father were killed in that car wreck, and calling you aunt and uncle and--well I just can't tell you how much I appreciate it all. But something's been bothering me. When Jerry comes home to help Uncle Jim run the place--well, I know how much you have been looking forward to his coming and I don't want to be a nuisance. I think that I could get me a job in town. If I can find a room I intend to move---

SALLY: Why Carol, we will always have room for you. These last few months have had an added touch of heaven, just because you've been here. When Jerry comes home and meets you, I know that he will want you to stay. And you know there is plenty of room for all of us.

CAROL: Oh, Auntie, you're so wonderful to me. I didn't want to go, but I didn't want to be a bother either. I'm looking forward to seeing Jerry. From all that I've heard you say about him and from his pictures he must be terrific. (as Carol begins this speech she throws her arms around Sally.)

SALLY: (rising and winding up the sweeper cord) I think so. Now would you let me go so that I can get this place cleaned? (pause) Oh yes, and while I do this could you make Bud's bed?

CAROL: You bet! Would you like for me to take the sweeper?

SALLY: Yes, would you? (exit Carol right rear with sweeper)

JAMES: (enter left front, dressed in jeans, flat heeled boots, western shirt, and broad brimmed white felt hat. He is in his middle forties and gives the strong but kind impression. He removes hat and mops brow with handkerchief.) Anyone home?

SALLY: Hi, darling, where have you been? You look tired! I'm sorry dinner isn't ready. We've been so busy getting the house cleaned up we haven't gotten it started yet.

JAMES: That's O.K., Sally. (comes center and sits on the daveno) Yes, I am a little tired. I've just gotten back from

the spring meadows on the south side, and they are ready to cut. Jerry will get home in time to help us out. It will be a happy day for this ranch when he gets back home again. Bud is a fine boy, but honestly, he sometimes drives me almost crazy. He has to do everything twice to make sure he does a good job of it once, and then I have to check his work. Of course, Gus is a big help, but he is busy most of the time riding fences. It will seem good to have Jerry here to shoulder some of the responsibility.

SALLY: (proceeds with the dusting) I know you've been busy, Jim, and I certainly hope things will be better when our big boy gets home. I know you will think I am being silly, but I've been a little uneasy about Jerry. It wasn't like him not to want us to see him graduate this spring, and I never could understand why he insisted on staying in summer school last year when there was so much work here to be done. He didn't seem quite like the same boy when he was home on vacation at Christmas time either.

JAMES: (gesturing with palms of hands) Honey, you wouldn't be yourself if you didn't worry. Now don't think another thing---

CAROL: (enter right back) Hi, Uncle Jim.

JAMES: Why hello, Cinderella. (starts to right back exit) Why don't you ladies cook some grub while I touch up my whiskers. (exit)

SALLY: Make sure you get a clean handkerchief. A clean shirt is in the closet. (exit Sally and Carol left back)

BUD: (enter left front and calling loudly) Where is everybody? (pause) I'm about starved. (starts speech as he exits left back) Is dinner ready?

SALLY: (Off stage) You had better get cleaned up, Bud, and change those jeans. I think they could stand by themselves!

BUD: (enters left back and exits right back eating a carrot as he goes) I don't see why everybody insists on being so clean!

JERRY: (enters front left carrying a suitcase. He is a good looking six-footer dressed in sports outfit. During the first speeches he is very reserved but gradually changes as he discovers that his feelings about the ranch are not known.)

SALLY: (rushes in back left. Grabs Jerald and kisses him on the cheek from which he draws back a little. Carol is seen at left back.) Jerry, What a surprise! We weren't looking for you 'till afternoon.

JERRY: Ya---(puzzled expression) Oh,--I got in town on the morning bus, and caught a ride out with Mr. Garrison. (pause, enter Bud and James) Hi Bud, hi Dad.

BUD: Hi dude.

JAMES: (throwing his arm over Jerry's shoulder) How's my big boy? How did you get here? We were just hurrying around

so that we could make it to town in time to meet your bus. It's going to be great to have you home again.

JERRY: I was just telling Mother, I caught an earlier bus and rode out with Mr. Garrison.

SALLY: Oh, my! I haven't introduced Carol to you. How thoughtless of me. Carol this is Jerry, and Jerry this is the wonderful girl which I have written you about. (raising eyebrows and smiling at Carol) I think he should already know about you quite well, I certainly have documented my letters with your name. (taking Jerry's arm) My, it is so good to have you home. We've been counting the days until you would be here. I guess all things come to those who wait.

JERRY: (clears his throat) Yeh, I guess so.

BUD: (with mock oratory) Well, scholar, I suppose that noble head of yours is simply bursting with the benefits of our public education system. Let's hear you name the parts of a horse, and then I'll give you a lesson in riding.

JERRY: (becoming more at ease) Same kid brother! I see that time doesn't change everything. (smiling) Listen cowboy, if I can't ride old Dynamite within a week I'll name those parts and then take you down and sit on you.

BUD: Hey, listen to the wind blow.

JAMES: (smiling) O.K. boys, there will be plenty of time to argue later on. Suppose we have a little brotherly love and let Jerry take a rest. You're probably pretty tired from

riding, aren't you Son?

JERRY: No, it wasn't too bad. I left Chicago yesterday at 12:30, but one of my friends rode as far as Lincoln, and that broke the monotony.

SALLY: (starting to move from circle) Well, now that some of the excitement is over maybe we better hurry with the meal. Knowing men I realize that you're almost starved.

BUD: (exclaiming) Men! Did you get that compliment!

CAROL: (speaking to Sally but for Bud's benefit) Why, Aunt Sally, Bud may be hungry too. (exit Sally and Carol left rear)

BUD: (with dejected expression) Me too? I like that!

JAMES: You asked for it, Bud. (pause) If you boys will excuse me I'll finish getting cleaned up. (starting to exit right rear) Oh, yes, Bud, see that he doesn't run away.

BUD: O.K. Dad. (exit James. Bud and Jerry sit on davenport) I'll bet you're really glad to get home, Jerry.

JERRY: Yeh, in a way. Bud, you don't know what you're missing though by being stuck at the ranch all the time. Since I've been gone I've been to Chicago a lot. Wow, what a place! There is real opportunity there. You ought to see some of the sights at night and rub shoulders with some of the society. There are more things to do than a person would ever dream of, and jobs that really pay the money. Even at Champagne I landed a chauffeur's job just driving an old dame

and her husband around for a buck fifty an hour.

BUD: You didn't write about any job.

JERRY: No, I guess I didn't. Well, forget about it--I'd rather the folks didn't know. It took so much time I almost failed my finals. That was why I tried to keep the folks from coming to the graduation. It's all over now anyway and no one is hurt so just keep it quiet will you, Bud?

BUD: Why sure, it's none of my business, but it does seem kinda strange. Mom has been telling me that if I didn't study I was going to disgrace the family name. She thought you were getting straight "A"s . (shrugs shoulders)

JERRY: Not this guy! A fellow has to have some fun sometime. (rises, going to window and looking out) Things really look sad around here. I don't know how I stood it for so many years. I was lucky to be away in summer school last summer.

BUD: (rising and looking out the window then at Jerry with a frown) What's wrong with the place? It looks good to me. It has made enough money to send you to school. We've been working hard to keep it in shape. Oh, me, I just kinda work along, but you don't know the way Mom and Dad have been working since we've been short handed.

JERRY: (turns away from the window and gives a palms out gesture as he sits on daveno) Now don't get sore. Sure, I know Mom and Dad are O.K.; just a little slow perhaps. You

don't understand, Bud. I don't hate the ranch. It's just a back number, that's all. Some people are made for this caliber of work. You may break away from the ranch someday and really get out on your own. Then you'll know what I mean. (leaning forward with interest and lowering tone of voice to the confidential) But I am surprised that Mother and Dad are so happy over seeing me. I supposed there would be tears all over the place.

BUD: (with frown) What do you mean?

JERRY: You know, ---after the folks read that letter that I sent last week I thought that---

JAMES: (enter right rear in a different change of clothing) Well, boys, don't let me interrupt your conversation, but if you'll take those suitcases into the bedroom, maybe we can convince the ladies that we are hungry enough to eat dinner.

JERRY: (rise Bud and Jerry) Yeh, O.K., Dad. (James exits left rear)

BUD: (glancing to make sure that Mr. Doyer is out of the room) Letter? What are you talking about?

JERRY: The one that explained everything, that last letter.

BUD: You're sure acting mighty mysterious about a bus schedule. I think the folks got one about two weeks ago telling us when you would arrive.

JERRY: No, that's not the one I mean. About a week ago, I finally wrote to Mom and Dad about my plans to---, are you

sure they didn't say anything about it?

BUD: (taking a short step toward Jerry with narrowed eyes and gesturing with head) Listen, Jerry, I don't know what you're talking about, but I do know that you're acting in a strange way that I don't like. The folks have been big on your being home, and some way or other I've got a feeling you'd just as soon not even be here.

JERRY: Aw, just forget it, kid, (the phone rings) Why don't you get the phone? I can handle these suitcases all right. (exit Jerry right rear. Bud starts toward phone)

SALLY: (entering hurriedly from kitchen and exit Bud right rear) I'll get it. It is probably Mrs. Buckman calling to give me that Angel food cake recipe. (lifts receiver) Hello--- Yes---Oh hello Mrs. Sanders---No---Yes, I knew you took the vacation---Is that right?---It must have been that new carrier again.---Well, of course, Jerry is home now---Oh, you didn't know?---Yes, he just got home today, so you see the letter wouldn't be very important to us now (smiles), but I would appreciate it if you would drop the mail off on your way--- That is certainly kind of you, Mrs. Sanders,---goodbye---. (hangs receiver) Now isn't that something!

CAROL: (enter on last speech) Aunt Sally are you talking to yourself?

SALLY: (turning) Oh, Carol, I didn't know you were here. The Sanders have just gotten back from their vacation and

discovered that the new mail carrier has misplaced some of our mail in their box. There are several magazines and a letter from Jerry. Mr. Sanders in going to leave the mail on his way to town. (pause) Carol, a person never gets too old to learn. I was almost beginning to blame Jerry because he wrote no more than he did. Now, you see I was the one who was wrong. One should always be careful about judging.

CAROL: (kissing Sally on the cheek) I'm sure that you didn't judge. Now that I know you are in your right mind, even if you were talking to yourself, I'd better adjourn to set the table. (starting to exit)

SALLY: By the way, please don't mention this late letter to anyone. I've misunderstood Jerry, and I would just as soon that the subject never came up. He has always been an excellent student, and he was probably so busy with his studies that he couldn't find time to write. Then, there is no telling how many letters that postman misplaced. It's so wonderful to have Jerry home. I don't want anything to cloud his arrival. (Jerry enters right rear followed by Bud)

CAROL: Madam, your wish is my command. (smiles and exits)

JERRY: Did I hear someone mention my name?

SALLY: Carol and I were talking. I just told her that it is wonderful to have you home. (pause) I know I've told you this already (pats Jerry's cheek) but we are so glad to have you home. We want you to rest up a little from your schoolwork,

but we are certainly glad we can count on you to help shoulder the responsibility of the ranch. (placing hand on Bud's shoulder) Of course we kinda like Bud, too.

BUD: (face brightening) How much do you like me, Mom?

SALLY: Why, what do you mean, Bud?

BUD: (confidentially) Will you talk Dad into letting me have the car tonight?

SALLY: (exasperated) Oh Bud! ---I'll tell you what I'll do. You help me pick and clean the chicken for dinner tomorrow, and we'll talk business.

BUD: It's a deal! (extends hand as if to shake and exits with Sally left rear. Jerry wanders around the room and finally comes to the family Bible on top of the fireplace. He picks it up and looks at it with a disgusted expression. Carol enters left rear carrying an ironing board and starts to exit right rear; Jerry still looks at the Bible and Carol turns at right rear exit.

CAROL: (turning to Jerry) Are you looking at your picture?

JERRY: Picture? I guess I don't understand.

CAROL: I suppose I'm rather snoopy, but not long after I came to stay with your folks I was looking through the Bible and saw your picture. (takes Bible and shows him) See, right here. Your mother told me later that it seemed to bring you nearer.

JERRY: (clears his throat) Mom always was rather sentimental.

(places Bible on fireplace, brightens) Say, that ironing board is pretty heavy, isn't it? Let me help you carry it. You should never over-do while you're young. (takes board)

CAROL: Oh, I've carried it before. (mischevious smile)

Really, is this what they taught you in Ag. school?

JERRY: No, the subjects weren't this interesting. (they exchange glances and exit right rear)

GUS: (a knock on the door is heard and Gus sticks head into the room) Mrs. Doyer---Mr. Sanders told me to give this to ya.

SALLY: (offstage) All right, Gus, just lay it by the telephone. (exit Gus and enter Sally. She looks rather carelessly at the mail, ad. libs. names of magazines, finds Jerry's letter and says) "Jerry's letter." (stands holding it a second, starts to the wastepaper basket holding it out as if to drop it, changes her mind and tears it open, starts slowly to scanning the page, stops abruptly, and looks sharply at the paper with wide eyes. Face takes on ashen color. She hurriedly finishes scanning the letter, walks quickly to telephone desk, and deposits letter. Starts across stage with remaining mail, gives a short cry and faints, falling near the easy chair so that her head is hidden from the crowd. A resounding thud is heard.)

CAROL: (enters talking to Jerry who is off stage, both enter) Yes, that would be fun. If Aunt Sally doesn't have

anything for me to do I will be glad to go--- (she screams as she sees Sally, enter Bud from kitchen)

BUD: Mom!

CAROL: Call Uncle Jim!

ACT ONE

SCENE TWO

Lighting: Same as Act One, Scene One minus one set of white

Time: One month later

Stage: Same as Act One, Scene One with the exception of flowers. As the curtain opens Mrs. Doyer is lying on the daveno propped up with pillows, and Jerry is seated in the easy chair thumbing through a magazine. He is dressed in casual slack clothes. Sally is attired in house coat and slippers.

HELEN: (entering left rear and going to Sally to feel of her pulse. Helen is in nurse's uniform from crown to toe. She gives the impression of being very efficient.) How are you feeling now, Mrs. Doyer? Is the headache any better?

SALLY: (feeble smile) I'm really feeling quite well, Helen. If these headaches stop I am quite sure that I'll soon be able to be up and around again. I'm very glad that you could come and help us out this last week, since they dismissed me from the hospital but I'm being treated like a baby!

HELEN: (arranging pillow and starting to shake down the

thermometer) Maybe you deserve a little pampering. You know, the weaker sex must take advantage in every way possible. This is a poor way to take a vacation, but you might as well enjoy it. That was a nasty fall you took. (finishes preparing thermometer and places it in Sally's mouth, smiles) Here, this will keep you quiet.

GUS: (enter left front) Say---er---ah---ma'am, I mean---ah---Helen---

HELEN: You mean Miss Braden?

GUS: Yeah---sure! (scratches his head) Now that's strange. (he is embarrassed, but is plainly quite struck with Helen) Can't remember what I was gonna say. Queerest thing! Cows never bother me this way. (pause) Wouldn't that make a hog whistle!

HELEN: Really---!

GUS: Just a minute---(holds one finger up as if listening) Got it!! (takes on a sly expression) It was about our little deal. You hadn't fergot it had ya?

HELEN: (gives an impatient shrug) Now look Gus, I can't possibly do that now. I am busy and Mrs. Doyer isn't feeling too well and---

SALLY: Why Helen I feel---

HELEN: (taking the thermometer and quickly putting it back in Sally's mouth) This is not your problem. (turning to Gus) So I couldn't go now. Maybe some other time.

GUS: (turning to left front) Waal, O.K., but I got a memory like an elephant. (winks and exits)

HELEN: (with force) And is about as graceful as a bull in a china shop. (removes the thermometer from Sally's mouth)
Now back to business.

SALLY: But really, Helen, I don't need you now. I mean if you and Gus---

HELEN: It's all right. I do have work to do, and he is a fly in my ointment. (looking at watch) I'll be back in five minutes to put you to bed. (exit left rear)

SALLY: I wonder what is going on! Gus has been acting strange lately. Do you know the connection, Jerry?

JERRY: (looking from magazine) Huh? Oh, I think he ran some kind of an errand for her yesterday on condition that sometime in the future she would let him show her around the ranch.

SALLY: Oh, I see. (pause) By the way, Jerry, where are Bud and your father?

JERRY: (continuing to read) I guess they must have left for Billing's farm sale.

SALLY: And you're not going?

JERRY: Guess not. (looking up from magazine, beligerently)
Dad said we could take today off. (raising voice) If I don't want to go to the sale it's all right isn't it?

SALLY: (starting to raise head, but putting hand to head

and lying back) Why sure, Jerry,---I didn't mean to be prying. I just wondered---

JERRY: (laying the magazine on the floor) It's O.K., Mom. I'm sorry I snapped. I just feel lousy and decided to stay home and loaf. It takes a while to get used to the ranch work again. (pause) Is Carol here?

SALLY: She drove into town to do the shopping. She should be back any minute. What a blessing she is to this family! If we didn't have her to help Helen and cook and do the house work I don't know what we would do. It seems like everything has been in such a jumble since I had that accident.

JERRY: I'll admit, she adds some glamor to the ranch.

(short period of silence)

SALLY: Son (pause) What is making you dissatisfied? Is there any way that I can help you?

JERRY: (with show of surprise) Why Mom, I don't need you to help me---that is---I mean I'm getting along fine. I don't need anyone's help. I'm a little down today, that's all.

SALLY: Jerry---

HELEN: (enter left rear) Time is up. Back to bed you go.

SALLY: (putting up a protesting hand) But Helen I---

HELEN: (putting finger to lips) Doctor's orders. No excuses. Give me a hand, will you, Jerry?

JERRY: (with relieved expression) You bet. (takes Sally's

arm and they follow Helen in exit at right rear. Enter Carol and Gus. Gus has both arms full of groceries and Carol is leading him through the living room to the kitchen)

CAROL: (enter and holds door for Gus) Gus, this is silly!

GUS: (stumbling through the door) Listen, little gal, my legs wasn't made to walk back to that there car and make two trips when Ah can make it jest as good with one. Mr. Doyer al'ys counts on me fer efficiency. You ought to be glad that good old Gus was handy.

CAROL: (looking fearful) Gus, come on and quit talking!

GUS: If that pretty nurse could just see me now! (as he is talking he follows Carol through the room, catches his foot on the carpet and falls, throwing groceries everywhere.

Carol slowly eases into a chair by the telephone and doubles over with laughter. Gus lies on the floor and slowly raises one arm which is covered with catsup.) Look at that catsup! Now wouldn't that make a hog whistle!

JERRY: (enter right rear) Carol! What happened? Are you all right? (he starts to put arm around her shoulders)

CAROL: (sits, holding her sides, laughing and looking up) Oh---I'm fine---but look at Gus!

HELEN: (enter right rear on Carol's speech) Carol! Jerry! Gus! Is he hurt? (Gus feigns an injured arm. Helen kneels quickly by Gus and exclaims) Gus Moreland! What are you trying to do? Don't you know there is a sick person in the

house?

GUS: (holds up his arm) Two sick persons! Look at that arm.
(as if in pain) Call an ambulance! Get a doctor! Stop the blood!

HELEN: Gus Moreland, you know very well that is catsup.
(pulling his ear)

GUS: OW, OOW, (rising) You'll stretch that all out of shape!

CAROL: Well, Gus, she sees you.

GUS: Aw, cut it out!

HELEN: What are you two talking about? (releasing her hold on his ear and taking him by the arm) You come into the kitchen and let me see if you got cut on the glass.

GUS: (with sly expression) I guess I'm a branded maverick!
(exit Helen and Gus left back. On exit Gus turns and winks at Carol and Jerry.)

CAROL: (rising and starting to pick up the groceries) If that Gus isn't a case. It would make one wonder if that accident were intentional.

JERRY: (helping Carol) He's been shining up to Miss Braden ever since she has been here. I don't know about his being branded, but I can say for certain that he has been hit with an arrow.

CAROL: (exits to get a sponge, broom, and dust pan. Jerry picks up the remaining groceries. Carol enters and says)
I'll say this, Miss Braden never had a better patient.

JERRY: I'll take these groceries into the kitchen and try not to repeat the antics of Gus. (exit left rear)

CAROL: (hums a tune as she finishes cleaning up the catsup. Helen and Gus enter left rear) Did you get patched up?

GUS: (showing his arm which has a bandage on it) Aren't you ashamed? If I hadn't a had Helen--er--Miss Braden here to help me I'd a probably bled to death. It's al'ays nice to have a nurse around. (smiles at Helen)

CAROL: Yes it is, Gus. I'm sorry I laughed at you. It was just too funny.

HELEN: Don't worry about him. Carol. That bandage is covering a scratch about an inch long which he received from a piece of glass. Now, Gus, (pushing him toward the door) run along before you bother Mrs. Doyer with more disturbance.

GUS: All right, (propelling his elbows) don't get shovie. (pause) Say, ya haven't fergot our deal have ya?

HELEN: Of course not, Gus. But I must stay with Mrs. Doyer this afternoon. Don't worry, I'll keep my word.

CAROL: And be glad to do it.

GUS: I just likes people who keep their word. I got a---

HELEN: (breaking in) Memory like an elephant. (shakes head) I know! (exit Gus left front) I don't know what to do with that man. (exit Helen right rear)

CAROL: (smiling knowingly) But I think she is getting a good idea.

JERRY: (enter left rear) What did you say?

CAROL: Oh! I guess I was talking to myself.

JERRY: Now that the food is disposed of, do you mind if I talk to you? (catching her by the hand and leading her to the davenport where they sit)

CAROL: Of course not, Jerry. I wanted to talk to you, too, about your mother. Have you gotten to talk to her any today?

JERRY: (nods head) I did for a little while, why?

CAROL: You know, Jerry, I'm really worried about Aunt Sally. It's been a month since she fell and hit her head, and still she has those terrific headaches. I was so worried that when I was in town today I stopped in to see Dr. Blake. I think that he was a little peeved about my coming to see him. He wouldn't tell me anything. Jerry, I just know that something awful is wrong. If it were just a concussion why doesn't Aunt Sally get well?

JERRY: (sitting with elbows on knees and staring at the floor with hands clasped) It seems like Doc Blake, Miss Braden, and Dad have a monopoly on the information and intend to keep it. I guess they don't want to worry us. When trouble comes Dad is always like a clam. (pause) I wonder what caused Mom to fall. (shakes head) It really fouled things up! It proved the old addage, "When it rains it pours."

CAROL: I don't think that I quite follow you, Jerry. (knits eyebrows) You mean it's pouring for Aunt Sally?

JERRY: (shakes head) Ya---well in a way. I mean Mom and---
myself and everyone who has been inconvenienced by the
accident.

CAROL: (frowns and shakes her head) Now I know I don't
understand you! It's Aunt Sally that has had the tough
breaks, but I can't see that the rest of us have any room
to complain. You shouldn't say that it is an inconvenience!

JERRY: (rising and starting to pace the floor) I'm sorry
Carol, but I can't be myself. I have something that I must
tell someone, and that is why I wanted to talk to you. (sits
beside her on the davenport) After this last month I think that
I know a little about what heaven and hell are like, if
there are such places. I hope that you don't think I'm a
heel, but I'm going to unload.

CAROL: I'm sorry I spoke so sharply, Jerry. (smiles reas-
suringly) Go ahead. I'm ready.

JERRY: It all starts back two or three years ago. I guess
you know the folks pretty well by now. Mom has always been
what I thought was a little straight-laced in her beliefs.
I thought Dad was pretty level, but when I went away to
college I guess something kind of snapped. Somehow Dad and
I didn't see eye to eye on the ranching operations, and I
didn't enjoy the summer vacations. Mom was always after me
to go to church and she kept talking to me about God and the
Bible. (gesture) I wasn't even sure there was a God. All of

this went along with my growing dislike for the ranch, and I decided not to come home any more than I had to. That's about where I was a month ago. I wrote a letter to Mom telling her how I felt about her ideas, God, the ranch, and all, and that I didn't intend to come home. The letter evidently didn't get here and I guess that it was a good thing, because I decided to come home just for a visit. (pause)

CAROL: (during Jerry's speech Carol should show empathy at first, but near the end a slightly cool attitude) Yes?

JERRY: Well, I came home and the story could have a happy ending except for two things.

CAROL: What---What do you mean?

JERRY: Mom didn't help it any when she fell. I just can't get the nerve to tell her how I feel and leave home when she's sick like this.

CAROL: (a little coolly) And---what is your other problem?

JERRY: (turning to Carol) It really isn't much of a problem. It is you. Mom had written that you had come to stay. I didn't like the idea at first, but when I saw you and got to know you---I---I don't know how to say it, but you're the main reason that I'm still here. It has only been a month since I first saw you, (leaning forward) but all of the fun we've had on dates, the moonlit walks, having you so near (takes her hand)---well, it's done something to me. It seems like I've known you for years. Will I be too bold if I say

that I love you?

CAROL: (with bowed head looking down at her hands) No-o-o
(lifting head with slight smile) No, Jerry, you haven't
been alone. I've loved every minute of it. I looked forward
to your coming home from college maybe even more than your
parents. It has meant a lot to me, too. (takes hands from
his, and with distress in her voice) But what now?

JERRY: (looks puzzled) Now? What do you mean?

CAROL: You know that you can't go on deceiving your parents.

JERRY: (worried expression on his face) Yes, I know that,
and from the way Mom acts I really believe that she knows
about it. I don't know how. I'm sure that the letter never
came before I arrived, because if it had the folks wouldn't
have acted so happy to see me. I've checked the mail every
day since Mom's illness, and it has never come. But still
it makes me nervous. (drops eyes) As far as my plans for the
future, they may depend upon you. (pause, then looks up) You
know Carol, it seems like I can't say things like I want to.
For a week now I've had this all figured. I knew just
exactly what I was going to say, but it seems like you're so
distant, or something, and I'm afraid that all of this isn't
going to sound right.

CAROL: (taking his hand and laying her head on his shoulder)
I guess I'm kind of upset today Jerry? (pause) What may
depend upon me?

JERRY: I've thought of having a good time at odd jobs away from home for a year or two, and then maybe I could settle down---if I thought that I had someone to settle with. Oh, I don't really want to bind you, but at least I would know you cared. If you cared enough, Darling, maybe I could even bear to stay here.

CAROL: (with fire and taking head from his shoulder) I care, Jerry, and I know you'll never get anywhere by running from your problems, but since you feel the way you do about your parents and the ranch, I'm sure that I wouldn't want you to stay here because of me. (taking his face in her hands, turning his head to face her, and with pleading tone) Why don't you tell Aunt Sally and Uncle Jim. That would be the right thing to do. You're being a hypocrite. If you go or stay you must live with yourself.

JERRY: (jerking his head away) Don't start preaching to me!

CAROL: (speech moves quickly and is filled with emotion) I'm not preaching. You mentioned settling down. You said that you loved me. I think that I loved you before I even met you. Sometimes I haven't wanted to because I haven't understood you. I think that now I start to understand. I love you Jerry, but your selfish attitude wouldn't be worth the love. I've been here while you were in school. I know some of the sacrifice that has been made to keep you there.

JERRY: (rises) It seems like I've heard this some place

before

CAROL: And I've heard Aunt Sally pray to the God in whom you don't even believe that He would keep you from harm.

(rises and takes him by the arms) Don't you see what this will do to your mother and what it is doing to you?

JERRY: (turning away) Leave Mom and God out of this.

(turning to her again) Carol, I've told you that I love you. (starts to take her in his arms) You don't know how much you mean to me. All that I'm asking is this, "Do you love me enough to either marry me now or to wait for me?" Isn't that real love?

CAROL: (lays head on his shoulder for moment then holds on and looks into his face) Can't you see that I love the real Jerry, the one that I know must be there, but that I can't see now? When you see yourself, then ask me---then ask me.

JERRY: (slowly disengages her arms as if they were distasteful) Look, Carol, you leave me cold inside. It's the same old line. I can tell that you've lived with the Doyers. (starts right rear) Just forget what I've said. I thought maybe you would understand me. Don't tell Mom what I said about her. I will probably hurt her enough anyway. (pause) Maybe I won't keep my selfish self around this place much longer to set such a horrible example. (exit Jerry right rear. Carol watches him go. Goes to the easy chair. Picks up a magazine and carelessly glances at it, and then folding

her arms on her knees she puts her head on them and quietly sobs as the curtain falls.)

Lighting: Medium white foot and overhead lights. Low blue and high red foot-lights. Very low light behind French windows to appear like moonlight. Floor lamp in alc. There is a light in the first place, and that one above the stage. Dyer living room. The scene changes from the living room to the bedroom. It is evening in the French country and the act opens with the finishing touches being administered to a musical in the Dyer home. As the curtain rises we find Max, Gerald, Red, Charlene Gustave, Warren Johnson, Della Peterson, John Allan, and Tom Scott. They are seated in a semicircle, and the wife next to the first. Gerald is a little with green and is sitting near right back. Red is sitting next to Charlene in center of semicircle, and Tom is sitting beside Della across the circle from Max. (Refer to the description of the characters as to the order of seats in this act.) The person playing the part of Tom Scott should give especial attention to character portrayal. Tom is a beautiful type of fellow, perhaps a little effeminate, who has been used to having his own way. The crowd won't be very forgiving of his conduct. All of his actions are to be repulsive. As the curtain rises the popcorn is being passed around and all are partaking freely except Della and Jerry.

her arms on her knees she puts her head on them and quietly sobs as the curtain falls.)

Lighting: Medium white foot and overhead lights. Low side and high red foot lights. Very low light behind French windows to appear like moonlight. Floor lamp is on. There is a light in the first place. (The light is on the floor lamp. Dyer living room. (The light is on the floor lamp. Two weeks later. It is evening in the French country and the act opens with the finishing touches being made to a circle in the Dyer home. As the curtain rises we find Sam, Gerald, Ed, Charlotte, Susan, Norman Johnson, Della Robertson, Jane Allan, and Tom Scott. They are seated in a semicircle, and the other next to the floor. Gerald is a little with down and is sitting near right. Ed is sitting next to Charlotte is center of semicircle, and Tom is sitting beside Gerald across the circle from Sam. (Refer to the description of the characters at the end of each page in this act.) The person playing the part of Tom Scott should give especial attention to character portrayal. Tom is a beautiful type of fellow, perhaps a little effeminate, who has been used to having his way. The crowd must be kept conscious of his conduct. All of his actions are to be repulsive. As the curtain rises the report is being passed around and all are packing closely except Gerald and Mary.

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

Lighting: Medium white foot and overhead lights. Low blue and high red foot lights. Very low light behind French windows to appear like moonlight. Floor lamp is on. There is a light in the fire place.

Place: Doyer living room.

Time: Two weeks later

It is evening in the ranch country and the act opens with the finishing touches being administered to a social in the Doyer home. As the curtain rises we find Gus, Jerald, Bud, Charlene Curtess, Norman Johnson, Celia Robertson, Jane Allman, and Tom Scott. They are seated in a semicircle, and Gus sits next to the fire. Jerald is a little withdrawn and is sitting near right rear. Bud is sitting next to Charlene in center of semicircle, and Tom is sitting beside Carol across the circle from Gus. (Refer to the description of the characters as to the dress of each person in this act.) The person playing the part of Tom Scott should give especial attention to character portrayal. Tom is a boastful type of fellow, perhaps a little effeminate, who has been used to having his own way. The crowd must be kept conscious of his conceit. All of his actions are to be repulsive. As the curtain rises the popcorn is being passed around and all are partaking freely except Carol and Jerry.

Carol is making a pretense of eating, but Jerry is even more reserved. Gus is speaking.

CURTAIN

GUS: (as he talks with popcorn in his mouth) I al'ys say there's nothin like this Wyomin' ranching country. (holds out his hands to the fire) Wouldn't this make ya want ta whistle "Dixie"? Feels real good! (shakes head in approval) Now when I was punchin doggies down Texas way we boiled all day and roasted all night! Of course out here ya can boil all day, but this night air even makes ya appreciate a fire.

TOM: (in very precise language, high pitched voice, and with mannerisms to fit his dudish dress) Yes, it certainly does feel marvelous. However, I'm afraid you're being a little unfair with we lovers of Texas. (with a better than thou attitude) You may be talking about an isolated area of Texas, but maybe you are not aware that I traveled with my father all over Texas. Of course, this was while he was still an insurance director and before we came to Wyoming to set up our dude ranch. (with smile) So I disagree with you, Gus, about Texas, but I do agree that Wyoming is most pleasant. (during his speech he looks at Carol and Jerry eyes him with disfavor)

GUS: Yeh-well I guess I jest---(a dog is heard barking and fading in the distance)

CELIA: W-What was that? (girls look nervous, and Celia

moves closer to Norman)

BUD: (rising and going to the French windows) Don't worry. It's just old Blacky sounding off at the coyotes. It seems like they come pretty close to the ranch buildings when the moon is full. It's almost like daylight outside.

NORMAN: Well, I'm glad they didn't come any closer. I'm afraid Cel would ruin the press in my trousers. She's practically on my lap now!

CELIA: (placing a well aimed blow on Norman's shoulder with her fist) Norman Johnson!! You know that isn't so! (by this time she has moved away with a knowing air) Besides, you were probably thrilled to death.

NORMAN: It was almost to death, but not with a thrill. A little more and I would have been squashed! (then adds with mock air of contrition) Aw, really Cel, I didn't mean it. Why if you get sore at me, I'll have only four favorite girls left! (Celia playingly pays no attention to him)

JANE: (smiling) I'll stick up for you Cel, and if I stop talking to him (motions toward Norman) too, he will lose his only girl friends in one night.

NORMAN: O.K., I give up. But really, you don't need to be afraid of any ferocious animals tonight---at least not when we have such a good chaperon to protect us. (looks at Gus)

BUD: (sitting again) That's right. Say, Gus, tell the kids how Miss Braden patched up that cougar bite on your arm.

(winks at Carol)

GUS: (raises an objecting hand) Aw now Bud---

JANE: (with surprise) Did Gus get bitten by a cougar?

CHARLENE: (smiling) From what I hear he even had a private nurse.

BUD: Had her? He still has her!!

GUS: (leaning forward in chair) This is against my institutional rights. (palms out gesture) This is presentation without preparation.

CAROL: It really wasn't a cougar. It would be more accurate to say that he had an argument with a catsup bottle.

GUS: (rising as if his feelings were hurt) All right! That's the last straw. If you are gonna make fun of me I'm leavin'.

TOM: Oh, do sit down and stay. (turning to Carol) Isn't he a card! So vivacious! (to Gus again as Gus starts to the door) If you leave we'll all have to, and (looking at Carol) I am certainly finding my company too pleasant to leave now. (through this entire scene Jerry has looked bored, and with a disgusted expression he exits right rear)

CAROL: (rising quickly at close of Tom's speech and saying with an over brightness trying to show Jerry her motive--to get Gus between Tom and herself) Do stay, Gus. If you will you may sit by me.

GUS: Waal now that you put it that-a-way---(sits with Carol on the daveno)

CELIA: (changing mood of party) It probably is about time for all of us to go. It was kind of the Doyers to let us have the party here, especially since Mrs. Doyer is ill, and we wouldn't want to over do it.

NORMAN: I think Cel is right. We don't want to wear our welcome too thin. By the way, how is your mother feeling, Bud?

BUD: It's hard to say. Dr. Blake doesn't say much, but Miss Braden won't let Mom get out of bed over ten minutes at a time. From what I can find out if she doesn't take an immediate change for the better the plans will be to operate. Isn't that right, Jerry? (looking around) Where's Jerry?

TOM: (with a knowing expression) Maybe he is used to parties of the livlier variety. He has been in the big city, you know, and probably thought the party was getting dull. (the atmosphere becomes tense. Bud frowns and slowly rises with clinched fists at his sides.)

JANE: (rising and speaking quickly and too brightly) Let's get started home! Cel, grab Norman and let's make him take us home. (Jane and Celia take Norman by the arms and usher him to the door)

NORMAN: (showing some resistance) Wait a minute! I wanted to take Charlene home!

CHARLENE: You don't have a chance. (looking at Bud) Someone has already asked. (during last three speeches Bud still

shows resentment towards Tom's statement by frowning and exchanging looks with him)

NORMAN: Well, get started, Bud. (as Bud hears his name mentioned he relaxes and gives his attention to Norman)
I'll bet I can get both of these girls in before you and Charlene get in, and I'll be waiting up for you.

CELIA: Norm, you hurt our feelings.

JANE: (to Carol) I guess you're the one we thank. It was a lovely party, and, Gus, I'm sure I speak for the entire group when I say that you make a splendid chaperon. (mischievously) I think that Miss Braden couldn't be in better hands. (Gus rises and takes a bow with a flourish, the usual goodbyes are said, and Norman, Charlene, and Jane exit left front, Gus slowly exits left rear)

CAROL: (rising) What did Norman mean that he would be waiting up for you, Bud?

BUD: (Charlene rises) Oh, I didn't tell you! I'm taking Charlene home in the old pickup and then driving over to stay all night with Norman. (starting to exit front left with Charlene and then turning back) By the way, Carol, in case anything should happen that Mom gets very sick, have Dad call me, would you?

CAROL: Sure, Bud. Uncle Jim said he was dead tired and I think he is in bed now, but don't worry. We'll let you know if anything should go wrong. (smiles) You have a good time.

BUD: (looking at Charlene) That will be easy. (exit Bud and Charlene, cars leaving in distance)

TOM: (Carol goes near left front exit and Tom rises and follows. They stand with their backs to stage. What Tom has to say plainly embarrasses Carol) My mother always says, "My boy, Thomas, is a man of few words," but I must admit that I am quite beside myself tonight. You simply can't imagine the thrill that it has been for me to be near you again. Remember last May when you allowed me to take you horseback riding at the ranch? For me it was pure ecstasy.

CAROL: Please, Tom, I---

TOM: Then this excuse for a gentleman returned from college---

CAROL: Please, not so---

TOM: (palms out gesture) He is indeed a strange fellow. However, from what I hear and observe, you might again be seeing other young eligibles, such as myself.

CAROL: It's pretty late, Tom, and maybe I'd better---(Jerry enters right rear unnoticed by Tom and Carol)

TOM: I've been watching this puppy love affair for some time now, and I'm glad you're finding out, Carol, what a real cad he is. You know, it is better to find it out now than later when it is too late. I want you to know that I am a sensible sort of fellow and when I see a lady in distress

I want to be of help.

CAROL: But I don't---

TOM: Just remember, you can count on me. When I get the kind of encouragement that I did tonight, I feel like a King Arthur who would die for his Guinivere. I am really sorry that I must leave so soon but I wouldn't want to deprive you of any of your beauty rest. (takes Carol's hand and kisses it. Jerry disappears right left) As they say in Spain, "Mannana", and I hope that it won't be very many tomorrows until we meet again. (exit Tom left front. Carol turns and walks over to the easy chair, sits and gazes into the fireplace. Enter Gus from kitchen. Carol looks around startled.)

CAROL: Oh Gus, you startled me! I thought that you had gone to bed.

GUS: Naw---I wanted to talk to you a little while, but I didn't really mean ta eavesdrop on your conversation with Tom. Was kinda hard to keep from hearing what he had ta say. Now mind ya, gal, I wasn't peekin'. That wouldn't be right. I was just listenin'. (coming across center to stand by the easy chair)

CAROL: It's all right, Gus. You wouldn't have seen much anyway---just King Arthur saying goodnight. I'm glad you're here. Sit down. (Gus carries chair and sits near Carol.) I could use some company. I guess I feel pretty low.

GUS: I did cetch somethin' about king business, but didn't rightly know where it all fit. But it was plain ta hear that when that fella moves in he really tries to move.

CAROL: Oh, this isn't the first time that he has shown his interest. He tried to date me before Jerry came home from college. I finally gave in and let him take me for a ride at his father's dude ranch.

GUS: Waal, I'm bettin' on ya. If anyone can handle these young upstarts, you can. I saw the way ya twisted Jerry around your leetle finger when he came home. If I know anything about sentimental things he was hit mighty hard.

CAROL: Speaking about cunning ways with the opposite sex, who are you to be talking about me. I'm surprised that you didn't contrive some way of getting Miss Braden to come to the party.

GUS: Oh, she's terrible practical. She said that she's out here every day, and I could just as well see her then. In fact, she'd just as leave I would let her alone. A course I knowed she really didn't mean it. Anyways, I didn't win the argument. 'Bout the time I thought I'd won, she put her foot down and said there was no use in me wastin' the gasoline ta run all the way into town.

CAROL: (laughs) Just keep it up, Gus. I think you're breaking her shell.

GUS: Ya--but I'm beginning ta think it's perty thick. (pause)

Say, what is Jerry's trouble besides green-eyed envy? Tonight at the party he looked about as comfratable as a dog kissin' a porkypine, and he had the same expression, too. That boy has only acted half like hisself ever since bein' home from college, and the last two-weeks I wouldn't even know him. (looking at Carol quizically) You and him been havin' a fallin' out?

CAROL: (nods her head yes) Gus, how long have you been here with the ranch?

GUS: (scratches his head) Well, it's been quite a spell since I was any place else. I come up from Texas when Bud was jest a leetle tad, and Jerry wasn't much bigger. Heard about this country from a friend of mine. I thought I'd come up and kinda look things over. I jest never got away. What makes you ask?

CAROL: (leaning forward) You said that Jerry has been actin' strange lately, so strange that you would hardly know him. Was he any different before he went to college?

GUS: Listen, leetle gal, in high school he was the rage. He was al'ys the center of things and a real helper on the ranch, too. Oh, a leetle headstrong, per'aps, but not flighty like Bud. You shoul'da knowed him then. I can't 'magine what happened to him. I don't want to talk about yer boy friend this way, but sometimes I feel jest like turnin' him over my knee, and learnin' him a lesson. I don't know what's gone

wrong between you and him, but I'll bet it wasn't yer fault.

CAROL: Oh, Gus, it seems like I'm so mixed up. (with distressed voice) I heard Aunt Sally talk about him so much that I almost fell in love with what I thought he would be. Everything has gone wrong, and now Tom is pestering me again.

(takes out a handkerchief and twists it, sniffs and wipes a tear) I suppose that I shouldn't bother you with this.

GUS: Why, honey, I've got a big shoulder. I shoulda kept my mouth shut. But if it'll make ya feel any better, I'm a good listener.

CAROL: (tries to smile as she dabs another tear) Don't feel badly about my crying. It seems like I always have to make a spectacle out of myself by crying. (dabs eyes again) I've wanted to talk to somebody for three weeks, but Aunt Sally was sick and (shrugs shoulders)---and there didn't seem to be anyone that I could turn to.

GUS: Here (hands her a red bandana handkerchief), this one'll do the job. (Carol again tries a smile as she takes the handkerchief and blows) Now, I'm still listenin'.

CAROL: There really isn't much to say. I know that I love Jerry, but the other day we had a heart-to-heart talk, and when I tried to help him, he grew sullen. Of course, Tom didn't help any tonight. I just don't know what to do.

GUS: I'm perty poor at given advice, but someway er other, I jest know that it will work out the way it should. Jerry

has some mighty good blood in his veins. Maybe he'll come to his senses one of these days. (rising) I'm going to get some shuteye. You look kinda like you could use some, too. Now I want ya ta promise me that you'll get ta bed right away. Do ya promise?

CAROL: But I---

GUS: Now no excuses. A leetle sleep can straighten out a lot of trouble.

CAROL: (handing his handkerchief to him) I guess you're right, Gus. I promise.

GUS: Then I'll see you tomorrow. And let me tell you some-
thin' (taps her on the shoulder with his finger) If I warn't so old and leathery, Jerry ner Tom neither one would stand a chanct. (turns on heel and starts left front)

CAROL: (trying to smile) Why, Gus! (Gus turns on heel and throws a kiss to her. (exit Gus. Carol watches him go and then goes over to check the fire in the fireplace. Snapping the electric light switch she goes to the bedroom right rear.)

The stage remains vacant for about one minute in which the only light is the flicker of firelight and the moon shining through the French doors. Jerry in sports outfit emerges from the right rear door carrying a packed suitcase. He is neat in appearance except that his hair is disheveled. He sets the suitcase down, goes to the fireplace where he finds a flashlight, finds the family Bible, glances at it

and throws it to the easy chair, pauses, goes to the table and by the light of the flashlight looks at a note which he takes from his pocket. Quickly he adds a few lines to the note, pausing only when he hears a dog howl in the distance. As he is writing with his back to right rear, Mrs. Doyer is discovered by the audience at right rear. She holds a letter in her hand. When Jerald finishes writing he leaves the sheet of paper on the table with the flashlight. He puts a hand to his hair, and exits left rear. Mrs. Doyer comes into the room unsteadily and goes to the suitcase. With difficulty she kneels by the suitcase, lays it on its side, and tries to open it so that she can place her letter inside. She hears Jerry returning and exits with her letter right rear leaving the suitcase on its side. Jerry enters at left rear with combed hair, frowns as he notices the different position of the suitcase, shrugs, picks up the suitcase and exits left front. Mrs. Doyer re-enters and looks out French windows as car starts and moves away in the distance. She turns to the table and using it to steady herself reads his note by flashlight. She turns facing front stage and with a voice filled with emotion says, "Oh, Father, protect my boy." She turns and kneels at the daveno in prayer.

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE TWO

Lighting: High white foot and overhead lights. Low red and blue foot lights. No light behind French windows. Floor lamp is not on. There is a fire in the fireplace.

Place: The Doyer living room.

Time: 7:00 A.M. the following morning.

(As the scene opens, Carol in house coat and slippers is frantically dialing at the phone. There is no answer, and she dials operator. She is very excited and there is much agitation in her voice.)

CAROL: Operator, operator---could you help me place a call to Goodwin 3650? (pause) I've tried, but the line seems to be busy.---But, operator, I must place this call. (pause) Yes, this is urgent. (pause) Thank you. (pause) Hello, is this the Johnson residence?---Oh, Mrs. Johnson---This is Carol Holland, may I speak to Bud? (pause) Well would you tell him that Mrs. Doyer is very sick. Uncle Jim has just left with her in an ambulance.---Would you please? (As Carol hangs up, Gus comes in front left. He is dressed in his work togs.)

GUS: (with concern) Did you git ahold of Bud?

CAROL: No, (going to davenport to sit on the arm near the table) but I finally got the line cleared and talked to Mrs.

Johnson. The boys were just getting up. She was going to tell Bud immediately, so he should be here soon. It's only two miles to their ranch.

GUS: (goes to sit in chair by the telephone) Wouldn't that beat ya how things happen so sudden like! The Missus gets turrible sick, Jerry skidaddles, and who knows what will happen next! Trouble jest seems to follow that boy. (pause) I thought I heard the car leave last night, but I warn't for sartin. It don't all add up. What was she doin' out here at the daveno, and why did Jerry leave? Didn't he leave word anywhere? (glances around the room)

CAROL: When Uncle Jim called for me to get up, there was so much excitement that I guess no one looked. (looks under the table and exclaims) Why there is a piece of paper here! It must have gotten brushed off in the excitement. It's addressed to Uncle Jim. Maybe we shouldn't read it if it's private.

GUS: (rising and approaching the table) It surely ain't very private, since it ain't folded er nothin'. What does it say?

CAROL: Well---It says, "Dear Dad, (as she nears the end of the letter she reads clearly but in a low voice, fighting back the tears) I don't know why I'm going for certain. I guess I've been a hypocrite. What I want more than anything else is time to think. When and if I ever come home I want

to be a worthy son. Hope you don't mind my taking the car. I'll leave it at the bus depot in town. Love, Jerry P.S. Dad I'm leaving this here because I know you'll be the first to see it in the morning. Tell Mom goodbye. I don't want to hurt her. Tell Carol that I'm sorry I acted like a heel at the party tonight, and tell her it's O.K. about Tom." (she sinks back on the daveno. A car motor is heard and Bud comes bursting in dressed as he was the previous night but disheveled.)

BUD: (looking askance at Gus and Carol) Where is everybody? Mrs. Johnson said Mom was sick and that I better hurry home. Where is she? (pause) Somebody say something!!

GUS: Yer mother's perty sick. Mr. Doyer left with her about half an hour ago in an ambulance. (pause and shrugs shoulders) All kinda strange like. She was out here by the daveno for no one knows how long last night.

BUD: (starting to left front and speaking in sharp, excited tones) Were they going to Harrington? Which hospital? I've got to get to her. Don't just stand there!

GUS: (laying his hand on Bud's shoulder) Yer Dad told me to tell you to jest wait 'till he called. Better git ahold of yerself and set down a minute. Everything'll be all right.

BUD: (sharply) That's easy for you to say. She's my mother! (pause and lowering his voice) I'm sorry, but it

seems like I want to do something and can't do anything.

GUS: We know what you mean, but 'bout the best thing we can do is wait and pray.

BUD: Say, where is Jerry? (Carol hands him the slip of paper and fights for emotional control. He scans it silently.) Well of all the nerve! Mom as sick as she is and he can't even stick around! Even took the car to town. Dad might have gotten Mom to the hospital quicker if---(he is interrupted by the phone. It rings but nobody moves. It rings again) Could--Could you get it, Gus?

GUS: (picking up the phone) Hello---yeh---this is him speakin'. Oh, Miss Jones. (long pause) Oh! No! (this is almost a groan, and he looks quickly at Carol) I mean, yes, Miss Jones---yes, Maam. (he hangs up. Bud comes across the room and takes him by the shoulders.)

BUD: What is it Gus? What was the call?

GUS: It was Dr. Blake's nurse, Miss Jones. (pause) Yer dad wants you to stay here. He'll be home this afternoon. I guess I'd better be---(he starts to left front exit, but Bud catches him and pulls him around.)

BUD: What else, Gus? (in a threatening manner) What else did the nurse say?

GUS: I---Your mother isn't here anymore. She was gone before they got her on the operating table. (Carol muffles an, "Oh!", runs to right rear, and exits. Bud reels back to the daveno

and slumps down on it)

BUD: (buries head in hands and starts a low hysterical laugh. Looks up at Gus) Not her, I know Mom! (short laugh, then goes on as if he is talking to himself) You're kidding me, Gus. She always makes it through. Just a little headache. No siree, Mom will make it all right. (as he is talking he finds in one of the cushion crevices the letter which Mrs. Doyer failed to get into the suitcase the previous night.) See, Gus, I'll bet this is a letter from her. (all this time Gus has been sitting by the telephone with his face in his hands. At mention of letter he looks up. Bud looks perplexed and says slowly) No, this is from Jerry to Mom. It says, "Dear Mom, I've decided not to come home after all. It would probably be pretty crowded with this girl you're keeping. Then, too, I've had enough of your ideas about God, the church, the Bible, and so forth, and I don't like for Dad to be bossing me around. Thanks for those things that you have done for me. Your Son, Jerry." (pause) Then at the bottom there's a note saying, "We still love you, Jerry, please come home. Love, Your Mother." (in controlled but non-sensical babbling) Why would you want to write a letter like that, Jerry? You're a good guy. I know we play tricks on Mom, but this is too much. You didn't mean anything by it, but she wouldn't like it if she read this letter. (again Bud buries his face in his hands. Then he snaps erect and shouts

at Gus) Don't you see; this is it! The letter, the one that never came, the one that killed Mom. (walks to Jerry's picture sitting over the fireplace, throws it to the floor, and finishes his speech in a crying wail) I hate you! Mom's gone! Oh, Gus, I hate him, I hate him, I hate him, I hate him.

CURTAIN

JERRY: (entering) Oh, You're here, Dad. (sitting in an easy chair) I was getting ready to spend an evening at home by myself. I might have known, though, that you'd be here. Lately, when you're not out with Chevrolet, I can always depend on finding you somewhere around the ranch. You're getting to be quite a home body. I thought I heard Carol

ACT THREE

Lighting: High white overhead, high red and blue foot.

Floor lamp is on. There is a fire in the fireplace.

Place: Doyer living room.

Time: About one year later.

As the curtain rises we find Bud seated on the daveno. He has undergone quite a change, including actions and dress. He is dressed in oxfords, clean jeans, and clean western shirt. His makeup should show him as older and more serious than in previous acts. He is looking at the family picture album. James enters right back, dressed in slacks, moccasins or house slippers, and western cut shirt. The one who plays the part of James Doyer should be careful not to give the audience the impression that he has not been affected by his wife's death, but he should give the impression that he is making the best of existing circumstances. Bud has changed and is now more dependable, but he holds a grudge against Jerry.

JAMES: (entering) Oh, You're here, Bud. (sitting in an easy chair) I was getting ready to spend an evening at home by myself. I might have known, though, that you'd be here. Lately, when you're not out with Charlene, I can always depend on finding you somewhere around the ranch. You're getting to be quite a home body. I thought I heard Carol

invite you to go boating with her and Tom.

BUD: (shrugging his shoulders) She did, but I decided against it. It wouldn't have been much fun. Carol probably wanted me to go so that she wouldn't be bored to death, but I know Tom didn't want me along. He's a stuffed shirt if I ever saw one. Carol never dates him until she's given him every excuse in the book. I can't figure him. He's kind of a Little Lord Fauntleroy-Shakespeare combination.

JAMES: Well, I'll admit he is a little different; however, he gives Carol some company. (pause) By the way, has she said anything to you about leaving to find a job?

BUD: Not that I can remember. Why isn't she satisfied here?

JAMES: (starts to pick up a magazine) I think she feels that it is time for her to leave. I don't really blame her. Our ranch was a haven for her after the death of her folks, but there has been a lot of tumble weeds under the bridge since then. She's been here a year now since mother has been gone. I'm afraid we men are rather an uninteresting lot. (pause) Of course, I don't know what we'll do if she leaves us.

BUD: Yeh, that would be bad. I sure hope she stays. She has been a regular sister. (pause) Dad, do you ever get lonesome?

JAMES: (lays his magazine down) I suppose I do, Bud. What makes you ask?

BUD: Oh, I've been looking in this picture album that Mom used to keep. You know, for a long time after she left us, all I thought about was Bud. Then I started thinking that after all I had a lot of living ahead of me, and you were the one that I should feel sorry for. (pause) Dad, I--I don't know how to say this. It almost seems sacreligious to say when I think about Mom, but--well--if you ever find a--if you ever decide to--what I mean is that I'm never going to kick if you---

JAMES: I think I know what you mean and I appreciate it, Son; however, as a person grows older much of his life is lived in the past. Memories can be assets, or they can be detriments. Your mother left many pleasant memories which have helped a lot. I haven't worried about anyone's coming along to attract my attention. But I must confess, Bud, I've been quite worried about you.

BUD: (closes the album) What do you mean, Dad? If it's about the ranch work, I'm sorry. I've been working pretty hard, but I know I haven't kept up my share of the---

JAMES: It isn't that, Bud; I've been proud of the way you have helped with the ranch work. I'm talking about your attitude, your attitude toward Jerry.

BUD: But---

JAMES: (motions for him to be still) I know, you don't want to hear anything about him. I've heard that before, but

there's something that I haven't told you. I didn't think there was any need before, but I believe that it will help you now.

BUD: Dad, you know---

JAMES: (cuts in) When we were rushing mother to Harrington in the ambulance, and I was sitting there beside her she suddenly became conscious. In those few moments she told me a lot. She seemed to know that she might not be with us much longer. She told me all that you've kept secret. She mentioned a letter that had come from Jerry which caused her to faint, and she also said that she tried to slip it into his suitcase the night he left.

BUD: (leaning forward) So that's the reason---

JAMES: I've known all this time that you had the letter, Bud.

BUD: Listen, Dad---

JAMES: (understanding but firm) No, Son, you listen this time. When mother didn't make it to the operating table and Dr. Blake later said that it had evidently been a latent tumor that became active because of that fall, I felt a wave of bitterness sweep over me. Then I remembered the last thing Mother said in the ambulance, "I love him, Jim, he's my son!" I don't think Mother approves of the way you're acting. You had better burn the letter, Bud. It's not really yours, you know.

BUD: (sitting back) I know, Dad. I would have told you

about the letter when I first got it, but I thought it would make you feel bad. Ever since I got the letter I've been keeping it knowing that surely I'd get a chance to give it back to Jerry. (grimly) When he wrote saying that he had joined the merchant marine but didn't give any return address I was disappointed because I wanted to send it to hurt him. Then he wrote saying that his ship was soon to dock and that he was coming home. I'm glad because I've intended to pay him back for what he did to Mom, and now I'll get my chance. He doesn't even know that she isn't here anymore.

JAMES: You disappoint me, Son. When Jerry learns about Mother's death it will be punishment enough. This thing of trying to get even is quite another thing. Jerry has changed. The last letter he wrote was addressed to Mother. He told how he had felt towards her, and asked forgiveness. You'd better think it over, Bud.

BUD: I will, Dad. (door bell rings. Bud rises) I'll get it. (goes to left front) It's Gus and Miss Braden. (enter Helen and Gus. Mr. Doyer rises and goes center stage)

JAMES: Hello. My what a pleasant surprise! Come in and have a seat.

BUD: (to James) I'll be in my room reading if you want me. (exit right rear. James nods assent)

HELEN: (Helen and Gus sit on the daveno. Mr. Doyer goes back to the easy chair.) Since you released Gus from his

work early tonight, we decided that we would come out to see you.

JAMES: Well, I'm certainly glad you came. We are always glad to have you in our home. You were such a tremendous help when Mother was sick. You've never visited us since then, have you?

HELEN: No, I guess I haven't. The work at the hospital has kept me pretty busy, and Gus insists on taking so much of my time.

GUS: This was such a purty evening she jest couldn't resist me.

JAMES: I noticed a few lazy clouds over the mountains. But I'll agree with Gus, it is a lovely evening for a drive.

HELEN: I was afraid one of those quick storms would pop over the mountains like they do sometimes, but Gus reassured me that everything would be fine.

JAMES: I take it that Gus finally made his little deal with you.

HELEN: Yes, he has quite a persuasive element about him.

GUS: Yeh, (clears his throat) well--uh--there's a leetle business that we have ta ask ya about. I was gona do it myself, but Helen---

HELEN: (frowning) Don't be so blunt, Gus. My, Bud is really growing.

JAMES: (raising eyebrows) Yes, he's sprouting right up.

GUS: Ya see, we thought---

HELEN: (giving him a withering look) Is Carol still staying with you?

JAMES: Yes, she went out boating earlier in the evening with Tom Scott, she should be home any time.

GUS: (determined not to be foiled in his conversation)--- that maybe---

HELEN: (nudging Gus in the ribs with her elbow and looking around the room) She is a good housekeeper. This place looks spick and span.

JAMES: (signals a stop with his hands) Say, wait a minute. Gus, what are you trying to say?

GUS: Well, Ya see, Mr. Doyer, I'm about ta take on a new boss.

JAMES: (with a concerned air) Why, you never mentioned anything to me before about leaving.

HELEN: (with glowering look at Gus then turning to James) That's his trouble. He never can say what he means. It's a wonder that he ever---

GUS: Now, I didn't mean I'd be leavin'. Course I'd like to leave for two or three days, but I sure aim to come back. It's this-a-way. I ran jest as long as I could, but when Helen popped the question---

HELEN: (playfully hits Gus on the shoulder) Gus Moreland!! (with an uppish air) What he means is--he begged me so much

that I finally felt sorry for the man, and gave in. We're to be married two weeks from Sunday.

GUS: (reaching with his right forefinger and tapping his left shoulder signifying that he is hen-pecked) Peck, peck.

JAMES: (rising, going center and shaking hands with both) May I be the first to congratulate you. (to Helen) I'm sure that another boss will help Gus.

GUS: Helen has spotted a trailer house in town that she thinks she wants. Me, (shrugs shoulders and gives palms out gesture) I don't know why the bunkhouse wouldn't be O.K. (winks at James) So what we wanted to ask ya was if there might be some place that we could park a trailer here at the ranch. (sound of car motor is heard)

JAMES: (smiles) I'm sure that some place on the 3,000 acres we can find a place to set it.

HELEN: That is very kind of you, Mr. Doyer, and we appreciate it. (looking at her wrist watch) Gus, we really can't stay long. (to James) I go on duty at the hospital tonight at 10:00. (car is heard approaching) Besides, it sounds like you have company. (James starts across center to left front)

JAMES: Oh, don't rush off. You just got here. (looking at his watch) It's only 8:00 o'clock. You could stay an hour and still have plenty of time to get to your work.

CAROL: (ad. lib. muffled voices off stage--Goodnight etc.)

JAMES: (going close to front left entrance) I believe this is Carol now. (pause) (goes to door and talks to offstage) You kids are getting home early.

CAROL: (enter left front. Dressed in typical picnic outfit with either slacks or skirt. She wears a jacket and has a bandana) Yes! (she is short of breath and smiles at James. She removes her bandana and smooths her hair.) Those clouds really come up fast through the pass. We went to Lake Spaun, but we had only been out about thirty minutes when the lake got so choppy we had to quit. The clouds followed us home. They're getting quite dark west of us. (starts to remove jacket and sees Gus and Helen) Why, Miss Braden, Gus! I didn't realize you were here.

GUS: We aren't. (rises) I mean we aren't gonna be. If it'd rain and drownd out my old jittney and I wouldn't get Helen to work on time, those wedding bells might not ring.

CAROL: (going left back) Well, I don't know about your "jittney" but if this lovely evening doesn't turn into a rain storm, I'll miss my---(turning quickly) Did you say, "Wedding bells"?

GUS: Yes, Maam! (bowing low) I now present to you the future Mrs. Moreland.

HELEN: (rising) Quit clowning, Gus.

CAROL: (coming center) This is wonderful!!

GUS: Wouldn't it make a hog whistle?

CAROL: Congratulations, Gus, and my deepest sympathy to you, Miss Braden. (laughs)

HELEN: Just Helen from now on. I'm quite sure that I'll need your sympathy. (pause) (takes Gus by the arm, distant thunder rolls) Really, Gus, I think we should go. (to James) I wouldn't want Gus to get caught in the middle of a storm on the way home. (Carol exits left rear where she leaves her jacket and bandana.)

GUS: At your command yer honor. (both exit front left. James follows to exit.)

JAMES: Come to see us again when you don't have to rush away. (thunder in distance, car is heard leaving. James turns to face stage) My that storm seems to be coming in quickly. (goes to French windows and looks out) I should have offered Gus the use of our car. I hope he doesn't try to come back to the ranch tonight with his old jalopy.

CAROL: (enter left back) What did you say, Uncle Jim?

JAMES: The way those clouds move in from the mountains is really surprising.

CAROL: (sits in the easy chair and smiles) It certainly foiled the picnic plans at the lake.

JAMES: (walks over to the fireplace and pokes the fire) It's too bad that it spoiled your evening.

CAROL: Oh, I was really rather glad. I guess you know how I feel about Tom.

JAMES: I think I do. (thunder. He goes to French windows and looks out) It looks like the rain is almost here.

(pause) If it weren't for that lightning I would say, "Let it pour." (starting to center and sitting on the daveno)

These fall rains help to hold the pasture, but it makes quite a risk for the cattle. (pause) I suppose that Tom was quite unhappy about the way your evening fell through.

CAROL: (opening purse and starting to work on finger nails with file) Yes, it was pretty hard for him to be his philosophical self. (thunder increasing in volume) I think he is getting tired of chasing me anyway. I don't blame him.

JAMES: He seems like a nice fellow, but I guess everyone must settle those things for himself. You seemingly have a mind of your own.

CAROL: (placing file back in the purse. Thunder) Why, Uncle Jim, you make me sound absolutely cruel. (smiles)

JAMES: (smiles) I think I sympathize with Tom. Bud and I both feel pretty low about this talk of your leaving the ranch.

CAROL: (seriously) When you used to spank Bud and Jerry, did you ever tell them that it hurt you worse than it did them, but still you felt that it was the right thing to do? (she pauses and James nods) That must be the way I feel.

JAMES: I know what you mean. However, I'm beginning to think that the boys should have been spanked more often than

they were. (thunder)

CAROL: Boys? (raises eyebrows) I didn't know Bud was giving anybody trouble.

JAMES: Actually he isn't. But he has a letter that Jerry wrote to Mother---

CAROL: Oh, you mean about his revenge. (thunder)

JAMES: (nods affirmation) Yes, I didn't know that you knew about it.

CAROL: I've known for some time, but I thought that he gave up the idea when he couldn't contact Jerry.

JAMES: (picks up a magazine, glances at it and then speaks) Carol, there is something that we fellows have kept from you. We knew that you and Jerry were interested in each other, but that it didn't materialize. I thought it wasn't right that he should hurt you again or interfere with your affairs, so I told Bud not to tell you. (Carol looks perplexed and leans forward) I thought you might be gone from the ranch by the time this event happened and it wouldn't affect you. In a letter that we received from Jerry recently he said that he planned to come home soon.

CAROL: (visibly shaken) I---I had no idea---

JAMES: Yes, and then this change that has evidently come to Jerry--(gestures with his hands) you see he is starting to write like his old self. Now if Jerry comes home and Bud is in this frame of mind things may be worse than they were.

(thunder)

CAROL: I guess there has been a lot going on that I haven't known. (rises) I---I'm thirsty. Would you like a glass of water, Uncle Jim? (exit left rear)

JAMES: No, I believe not. (rises and looks out French windows. Thunder)

CAROL: (enter left rear) How is the storm coming?

JAMES: The lightning is letting up some, but the rain is coming down in torrents. I do hope Gus uses his head and stays at the hotel tonight.

CAROL: Uncle Jim---

JAMES: Yes? (with face still to windows)

CAROL: Maybe I could talk to Bud about---

JAMES: Say, isn't that someone coming down the lane? (thunder, Carol comes to the window)

CAROL: Where?

JAMES: Now watch when the lightning flashes again. (thunder) There see?

CAROL: It did look like somebody. (pause and thunder) Yes, I'm sure it is. Who ever it is will be drenched.

JAMES: (going left back) I'll turn on the yard light. (exits left back and enters to go left front)

CAROL: (remaining at French windows) It must be someone who had car trouble. It might be Tom. (she starts center stage behind James as the door bell rings and Jerry steps into the

room. He is dressed in sports outfit which shows that it has been in heavy rain. His hair is disheveled and his face is flushed. As Carol recognizes him she steps back a little. Jerry stands with eyes downcast.)

JAMES: (throwing his arms around him) Jerry!! (pausing and looking at him at arm's distance) Home at last! What is the matter, Son?

JERRY: (with high emotion and clenched fists) Why did I do it, Dad? Sure I'm home but not to stay. I wouldn't want you to put up with an ingrate like me. (carefully takes James' hands down) How does it go, "I'm no more worthy to be called a son"? How could I leave when Mom was---was dying? (voice breaks)

JAMES: (questioning) Then you know?

JERRY: I just found it out an hour ago when I got into town. I left my suitcase at the depot. I caught a ride part way home and walked the rest of the way.

JAMES: (starting toward center and beckoning for Jerry to follow) You're soaking wet. Let's get you rigged up in some dry clothes.

JERRY: (shaking his head and refusing to follow) I'm not going to stay. I had planned to come home and help you run the ranch, but I wouldn't ask you to call me a son or Bud to call me a brother. I don't want you to pamper me. I'm through with being coddled and handled with care, but I came

because I wanted to ask forgiveness and let you know that I had changed.

JAMES: (takes hold of Jerry's arm) Jerry, your mother counted you as a son, and I count you as a son. Before you decide to leave, let me call Bud. I think he's in his bedroom reading. (exit right rear. Jerry and Carol are left facing each other. A few moments of strained silence.)

CAROL: (embarrassed) Won't you sit down? (goes to davenport and sits)

JERRY: (relaxes his expression a little and after an odd pause sits by the phone) It shouldn't take Dad long to get Bud. (long pause) It's---It's nice seeing you again, Carol. I've kind of lost out on the home news since I've been gone, but I've wanted you to know that I harbored no hard feelings about you and Tom Scott.

CAROL: (coming to Jerry across stage. He rises as she comes. She stands in front of him and speaks emotionally and with many gestures) Jerry, I'm tired of this "you and Tom". He doesn't mean a thing to me. A year ago you were doing everything wrong. We know there has been a change in you, but you still insist in doing wrong. (putting her hands on his arms) Can't you see that we all want you to stay? Two wrongs will never make a right. I can see the Jerry that I used to want to see so badly. You've hurt us all, Jerry. Are you going to make that hurt deep and lasting by leaving

again?

JERRY: (slowly) You mean that after all I have done you want me to stay--it would hurt you if I left?

CAROL: More than anything I can think of. I've missed you so. I love you. (she breaks into sobs and burries her head on his shoulder. Bud and James quietly enter right rear but remain near exit unnoticed by Carol and Jerry)

JERRY: (putting his arms around Carol) Honey, I'm so stupid. I had a case all built. I'm sorry I've hurt you. If I could only recall some of the harsh words I've said to Mom. If she only knew--do you suppose she does?

CAROL: (looking into his eyes) I'm sure she would be proud of you.

JERRY: Do you remember the question I asked you once? I'd like to ask again.

CAROL: You know my answer. (takes his face in her hands) All that I've ever wanted is the Jerry that I see now.

JERRY: Of course it may take me a few months to save up some money if Bud doesn't feel right about my returning to the ranch.

BUD: What's this about Bud? (Carol takes her hands from Jerry's face, but puts her arm around him and lays her head on his shoulder)

JERRY: Bud! I didn't see you---I---that is---

JAMES: (Bud starts across stage to Jerry. James looks

worried.) Bud,---

BUD: (to James) It's all right, Dad. (to Jerry) I've been listening and know all about it. Don't try to explain. (shakes Jerry's hand and puts other hand on his shoulder) And also, congratulations. Carol, isn't that an awful wet place to lay your head?

JAMES: (Carol smiles and moves head but takes Jerry's hand) Yes, Son, let's get that wet coat off. (Carol drops his hand and goes to stand between right rear exit and fireplace. James helps Jerry out of his coat.

BUD: It looks like we would get to keep our cook after all. (distant thunder. Bud takes a letter out of his pocket, goes to the fireplace, and throws it in during his last speech while James is helping Jerry. Jerry follows Bud with his eyes.) Dad, do we have a fattened calf?

JAMES: (starting to exit right rear with coat) About two hundred. (looks from Carol to Jerry) Judging by the way things are developing there will be time for making merry!

BUD: (to James) Just a minute and I'll help you dig up some dry clothes. (goes to right rear. Exit James. Bud to Jerry) Better come and get those wet duds off before you get double pneumonia. (distant thunder)

JERRY: (coming across center to fireplace) Be right with you, Bud. (exit Bud. Jerry to Carol) I wonder what he threw into the fireplace.

CAROL: (coming around easy chair to the fireplace) Oh, it was probably some old letter that he had. (pause) Why?

JERRY: It just reminded me of a cruel letter that I wrote to Mom before I got home from college. (raises eyebrows and looks at Carol) You remember, don't you? The one that was lost in the mail and never came through.

CAROL: I know the one you are talking about.

JERRY: If she had gotten that letter it would be a nightmare to me now. (faces audience but keeps eyes to the floor) Mom wanted me to come home so badly. (pause, and Carol comes up behind him immediately to the rear of his right shoulder. Jerry lifts his eyes looking toward left front.) I wish I could tell Mom that I'm home. (looks up as if talking to God) But---but God, maybe You would tell her that I'm home---home to stay.

CURTAIN

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